



TEN STEP TUESDAY

Cup Feeding

It's Ten Step Tuesday!

DID YOU KNOW?

Cup feeding preterm infants in the NICU is associated with higher breastfeeding rates at discharge, and at 3 and 6 months post-discharge.

*Citation: [Cup Feeding as a Supplemental, Alternative Feeding Method for Preterm Breastfed Infants: An Integrative Review](#), *Maternal Child Health J* 2018 Nov, 22 (11) 1568-1579*

Does cup feeding help establish breastfeeding in preterm infants?

Preterm infants are more vulnerable to morbidity and mortality than term infants, but they have lower breastfeeding rates at hospital discharge. Although most preterm infants in the US are discharged bottle feeding to some extent, evidence and clinical experience has taught us that bottle feeding may be associated with breast refusal in this population. Although one may argue that with enough perseverance, a preterm infant will eventually breastfeed, many families are doubtful and stressed by the work involved in transitioning to the breast. Many mothers of preterm infants in the US become exclusive pumpers, which is associated with early weaning.

According to a recent literature review of cup feeding as an alternative method for oral feeding, cup feeding and other similar feeding vessels have been used for many years by several populations worldwide to feed preterm infants. Preterm infants are able to cup feed by 30 weeks gestation, earlier than they are able to bottle feed. Use of cup feeding resulted in more stable heart rate and oxygen saturation than bottle feeding with similar weight gain. The potential for cup feeding as an alternative to bottle-feeding for breast fed preterm infants is positively supported by these results.

How to Cup Feed:

You'll need:

- Foley Feeding cup or other small cup
- Expressed mother's own milk, donor milk or formula
- A blanket to wrap your baby in
- Extra towel or wash cloth

1. Begin with a calm baby who is alert enough to participate in the feeding.
2. Pour a small amount of milk into the cup.
3. Wrap your baby gently in a blanket with his hands gently restrained and hold the baby in an upright position to avoid aspiration, supporting the shoulders, neck, and head with your hands. Put a wash cloth under his chin to catch spills.
4. Rest the cup on the baby's lower lip, allowing your baby to smell the milk. Tip the cup slightly so that baby's tongue can begin to lap up the milk. Keep the milk level at the baby's mouth like a tranquil lake. Do not pour the milk into the baby's mouth – avoid a tidal wave of milk into the baby's mouth. Let baby control how much milk goes into her mouth.
5. Record the amount taken.
6. Cups can be reused. After use wash with warm, soapy water. Rinse with fresh water and allow to air dry.

[Click here for a helpful video demonstrating cup feeding.](#)

For more information contact

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